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Questions relating to information

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Rapporteur: Mr. Damien **Cole** (Ireland)

I. Introduction

1. At its 2nd plenary meeting, on 19 September 2003, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include in the agenda of its fifty-eighth session the item entitled "Questions relating to information" and to allocate it to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee).

2. The Fourth Committee considered the item at its 14th to 16th meetings, from 27 to 29 October 2003 (see A/C.4/58/SR.14-16).

3. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Committee on Information on its twenty-fifth session;[1]

(b) Report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on its forty-third session;[2]

(c) Report of the Secretary-General (A/58/175);

(d) Note by the Secretary-General on proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 (A/58/90);

(e) Letter dated 1 October 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting the declaration adopted on 25 September 2003 by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77 and China (A/58/413).

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/58/21).
[2] Ibid., *Supplement No. 16* (A/58/16), chap. III, sect. B, programme 23.

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4. At the 14th meeting, on 27 October, the representative of Jamaica, in her capacity as Rapporteur of the Committee on Information, introduced the report of that Committee (see A/C.4/58/SR.14).

5. At the same meeting, the representative of Bangladesh, in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee on Information, made a statement (see A/C.4/58/SR.14).

6. At the same meeting, the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information made a statement (see A/C.4/58/SR.14).

7. At the 16th meeting, on 29 October, the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information made a further statement (see A/C.4/58/SR.16).

II. Consideration of proposals contained in the report of the Committee on Information

A. Draft resolutions

8. At its 16th meeting, on 29 October, the Committee adopted, without a vote, draft resolutions A and B contained in paragraph 67 of the report of the Committee on Information[1] (see para. 10).

B. Draft decision

9. At its 16th meeting, on 29 October, the Committee adopted, without a vote, the draft decision contained in paragraph 67 of the report of the Committee on Information[1] (see para. 11).

III. Recommendations of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

10. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolutions:

Questions relating to information

A
Information in the service of humanity

The General Assembly,

Taking note of the comprehensive and important report of the Committee on Information,[1]

Also taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information,[2]

Urges all countries, organizations of the United Nations system as a whole and all others concerned, reaffirming their commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to the principles of freedom of the press and freedom of information, as well as to those of the independence, pluralism and diversity of the media, deeply concerned by the disparities existing between developed and developing countries and the consequences of every kind arising from those disparities that affect the capability of the public, private or other media and individuals in developing countries to disseminate information and communicate their views and their cultural and ethical values through endogenous cultural production, as well as to ensure the diversity of sources and their free access to information, and recognizing the call in this context for what in the United Nations and at various international forums has been termed "a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process":

(a) To cooperate and interact with a view to reducing existing disparities in information flows at all levels by increasing assistance for the development of communication infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, with due regard for their needs and the priorities attached to such areas by those countries, and in order to enable them and the public, private or other media in developing countries to develop their own information and communication policies freely and independently and increase the participation of media and individuals in the communication process, and to ensure a free flow of information at all levels;

(b) To ensure for journalists the free and effective performance of their professional tasks and condemn resolutely all attacks against them;

(c) To provide support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes for broadcasters and journalists from public, private and other media in developing countries;

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[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/58/21).
[2] A/58/175.

(d) To enhance regional efforts and cooperation among developing countries, as well as cooperation between developed and developing countries, to strengthen communication capacities and to improve the media infrastructure and communication technology in the developing countries, especially in the areas of training and dissemination of information;

(e) To aim at, in addition to bilateral cooperation, providing all possible support and assistance to the developing countries and their media, public, private or other, with due regard to their interests and needs in the field of information and to action already adopted within the United Nations system, including:

(i) The development of the human and technical resources that are indispensable for the improvement of information and communication systems in developing countries and support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes, such as those already operating under both public and private auspices throughout the developing world;

(ii) The creation of conditions that will enable developing countries and their media, public, private or other, to have, by using their national and regional resources, the communication technology suited to their national needs, as well as the necessary programme material, especially for radio and television broadcasting;

(iii) Assistance in establishing and promoting telecommunication links at the subregional, regional and interregional levels, especially among developing countries;

(iv) The facilitation, as appropriate, of access by the developing countries to advanced communication technology available on the open market;

(f) To provide full support for the International Programme for the Development of Communication[3] of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which should support both public and private media.

B
United Nations public information policies and activities

The General Assembly,

Reiterating its decision to consolidate the role of the Committee on Information as its main subsidiary body mandated to make recommendations to it relating to the work of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat,

Concurring with the view of the Secretary-General that the fundamental premise underlying the reorientation efforts of the Department of Public Information remains General Assembly resolution 13 (I) of 13 February 1946, establishing the Department, which states in paragraph 2 of annex I that "the activities of the Department should be so organized and directed as to promote to the greatest possible extent an informed understanding of the work and purposes of the United Nations among the peoples of the world",

[3] See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Records of the General Conference, Twenty-first Session, Belgrade, 23 September to 28 October 1980*, vol. I, *Resolutions*, sect. III 4, resolution 4/21.

Concurring also with the view of the Secretary-General that the contents of public information and communications should be placed at the heart of the strategic management of the United Nations and that a culture of communications should permeate all levels of the Organization, as a means of fully informing the peoples of the world of the aims and activities of the United Nations, in accordance with the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, in order to create broad-based global support for the United Nations,

Stressing that the primary mission of the Department of Public Information is to provide, through its outreach activities, accurate, impartial, comprehensive and timely information to the public on the tasks and responsibilities of the United Nations in order to strengthen international support for the activities of the Organization with the greatest transparency,

Noting that the comprehensive review of the work of the Department of Public Information, requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 56/253 of 24 December 2001, and the implementation of its first phase, described in the report of the Secretary-General on reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session,[4] as well as the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change",[5] and its resolution 57/300 of 20 December 2002, as they apply to the Department of Public Information, provide an opportunity to take further steps to rationalize the work of the Department in order to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness, and to maximize the use of its resources,

Expressing its concern that the gap in the information and communication technologies between the developed and the developing countries has continued to widen and that vast segments of the population in developing countries are not benefiting from the present information and technology revolution, and, in this regard, underlining the necessity of rectifying the imbalances of the global information and technology revolution in order to make it more just, equitable and effective,

Recognizing that developments in the information and communication technology revolution open vast new opportunities for economic growth and social development and can play an important role in the eradication of poverty in developing countries, and, at the same time, emphasizing that it also poses challenges and risks and could lead to the further widening of disparities between and within countries,

Recalling its resolution 56/262 of 15 February 2002 on multilingualism, and emphasizing the importance of making appropriate use of the official languages of the United Nations in the activities of the Department of Public Information, aiming to eliminate the disparity between the use of English and the other five official languages,

Welcoming Saudi Arabia to membership in the Committee on Information,

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[4] A/AC.198/2002/2.

[5] A/57/387 and Corr.1.

I. Introduction

1. *Reaffirms* its resolution 13 (I), in which it established the Department of Public Information, and all other relevant General Assembly resolutions related to the activities of the Department;

2. *Calls upon* the Secretary-General, in respect of the public information policies and activities of the United Nations, to continue to implement fully the recommendations contained in paragraph 2 of its resolution 48/44 B of 10 December 1993 and other mandates as established by the General Assembly;

3. *Emphasizes* the importance of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005[6] as a guideline that sets out the overall orientation of the public information programme for the Organization's goals through effective communication;

4. *Reaffirms* that the United Nations remains the indispensable foundation of a peaceful and just world and that its voice must be heard in a clear and effective manner, and emphasizes the essential role of the Department of Public Information in this context;

5. *Welcomes* the proposals of the Secretary-General to improve the effective and targeted delivery of public information activities, including the restructuring of the Department of Public Information, in accordance with the relevant resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly;

6. *Reaffirms* the central role of the Committee on Information in United Nations public information policies and activities, including the restructuring process of the Department of Public Information, and the prioritization of its activities, and welcomes the continued constructive interaction between the Department and the members of the Committee;

7. *Calls upon* Member States to ensure, to the extent possible, that recommendations relating to the programme of the Department of Public Information originate and are considered in the Committee on Information;

8. *Requests* the Department of Public Information, following the priorities laid down by the General Assembly in the medium-term plan and using the United Nations Millennium Declaration[7] as its guide, to pay particular attention to such major issues as the eradication of poverty, conflict prevention, sustainable development, human rights, the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) epidemic, combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and the needs of the African continent;

9. *Also requests* the Department of Public Information to pay attention to all major issues addressed in the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals in carrying out its activities;

10. *Concurs* with the Secretary-General on the need to enhance the technological infrastructure of the Department of Public Information in order to widen its outreach and improve the United Nations web site;

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[6] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 6* and corrigendum (A/57/6/Rev.1 and Corr.1).

[7] See resolution 55/2.

11. *Recognizes* the important work carried out by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and its collaboration with news agencies and broadcasting organizations in developing countries in disseminating information on priority issues, and encourages a continued collaboration between the Department of Public Information and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in the promotion of culture and in the fields of education and communication;

II. General activities of the Department of Public Information

12. *Welcomes* the steps taken towards the restructuring of the Department of Public Information, as described in the report of the Secretary-General on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications,[8] and encourages the Secretary-General to continue the reorientation exercise and efforts to improve the efficiency and productivity of the Department, including wide-ranging and possibly new innovative proposals, taking into account broad principles and directions contained in the present resolution, and to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session;

13. *Reaffirms* that the Department of Public Information is the focal point for information policies of the United Nations and the primary news centre for information about the United Nations, its activities and those of the Secretary-General, and encourages a closer integration of functions between the Department and those offices providing spokesman services for the Secretary-General;

14. *Welcomes* the progress achieved since the commencement of the reorientation exercise in enhancing the performance and effectiveness of the Department of Public Information in accordance with the mandates established by the General Assembly and the recommendations of the Committee on Information, also welcomes, in this regard, its decision to implement an annual programme impact review, making self-evaluation a part of the daily work of all programme managers with a view to institutionalizing performance management, and requests the Secretary-General to transmit the report on the Department's annual programme impact review to the Committee on Information at its successive sessions;

15. *Requests* the Secretary-General, in the context of the reorientation process, to continue to exert all efforts to ensure that publications and other information services of the Secretariat, including the United Nations web site and the United Nations News Service, contain comprehensive, objective and equitable information about the issues before the Organization and that they maintain editorial independence, impartiality, accuracy and full consistency with resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly;

16. *Reiterates* that all printed materials of the Department of Public Information, in accordance with existing mandates, should not duplicate other publications of the United Nations system and should be produced in a cost-effective manner;

17. *Welcomes* the efforts of the Department of Public Information to reconstitute the Publications Board, in accordance with existing legislative mandates;

[8] A/AC.198/2003/2.

18. *Urges* the Department of Public Information to continue to exhibit transparency to the greatest extent possible, so as to increase awareness of the impact of its programmes and activities;

19. *Emphasizes* that, through its reorientation, the Department of Public Information should maintain and improve its activities in the areas of special interest to developing countries and, where appropriate, other countries with special needs, including countries in transition, and that such reorientation contributes to bridging the existing gap between the developing and the developed countries in the crucial field of public information and communications;

20. *Encourages* the Secretary-General to strengthen the coordination between the Department of Public Information and other departments of the Secretariat, including the designation of focal points to work with substantive departments to identify target audiences and develop information programmes and media strategies for priority issues, and emphasizes that public information capacities and activities in other departments should function under the guidance of the Department;

21. *Welcomes* the initiatives that have been taken by the Department of Public Information to strengthen the public information system of the United Nations, and, in this regard, stresses the importance of a coherent and results-oriented approach being taken by the United Nations, the specialized agencies and the programmes and funds of the United Nations system involved in public information activities as well as the provision of resources for their implementation, and that feedback from Member States on the relevance and effectiveness of its programme delivery should be taken into account;

22. *Also welcomes* the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Communications Group in 2002,[9] commends the Department of Public Information on its active and constructive participation in the Group, in particular its efforts to promote inter-agency coordination in the field of public information, encourages the Department to continue to play a key role in the newly established Group, takes note of the efforts being undertaken by the Group to develop further several key initiatives, and requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at successive sessions on the activities of the Group;

23. *Appreciates* the continued efforts of the Department of Public Information in issuing daily press releases, and requests the Department to continue providing this invaluable service to both Member States and representatives of the media, while considering possible means of improving their production process and streamlining their format, structure and length, keeping in mind the views of Member States and the fact that other departments may be providing similar or overlapping services in this regard;

24. *Acknowledges* the mission statement proposed in the report of the Secretary-General,[10] which is intended to include all activities of the Department, and which reads as follows: "The Department of Public Information's mission is to help fulfil the substantive purposes of the United Nations by strategically communicating the activities and concerns of the Organization to achieve the greatest public impact";

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[9] A/AC.198/2003/6.

[10] A/AC.198/2003/2, para. 11.

25. *Welcomes* the new operating model of the Department of Public Information as described in the report of the Secretary-General[8] which, inter alia, recognizes that content generation emanates from the other departments and offices of the Secretariat and organizations of the United Nations system, while content coordination and refinement as well as content presentation and distribution are the responsibility of the Department, working in close cooperation with the media, Member States and civil society partners;

26. *Requests* that during the deliberations on the item entitled "Questions relating to information" in the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) during the successive regular sessions of the General Assembly, an informal interaction between the Secretariat and members of the Committee should take place after the presentation by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information on the substance of that oral briefing, within existing resources;

Multilingualism and public information

27. *Welcomes* the ongoing efforts of the Department of Public Information to enhance multilingualism in its activities and encourages the Department to continue its endeavours in this regard;

28. *Emphasizes* the importance of ensuring the full, equitable treatment of all the official languages of the United Nations in all activities of the Department of Public Information, and stresses the importance of fully implementing its resolution 52/214 of 22 December 1997, in section C of which it requested the Secretary-General to ensure that the texts of all new public documents in all six official languages, and information materials of the United Nations, are made available daily through the United Nations web site and are accessible to Member States without delay;

29. *Reaffirms* its request to the Secretary-General to ensure that the Department of Public Information has appropriate staffing capacity in all official languages of the United Nations to undertake all its activities;

30. *Reminds* the Secretary-General of the need to include in future programme budget proposals for the Department of Public Information the importance of using all six official languages in its activities;

Bridging the digital divide

31. *Recalls* the decision, endorsed in its resolution 56/183 of 21 December 2001, to convene the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva in December 2003 and in Tunis in 2005, welcomes the initiatives undertaken by the Department of Public Information for this Summit, encourages States, relevant United Nations bodies and entities, other intergovernmental institutions and civil society to continue to actively participate in this process, and reaffirms the importance of the active involvement and support of the Department in raising global awareness of the Summit and its main objectives;

32. *Commends* the Secretary-General for the establishment of the United Nations Information Technology Service, the Health InterNetwork and the Information and Communications Technology Task Force with a view to bridging the digital divide and as a response to the continuing gulf between developed and

developing countries, welcomes the contribution of the Department of Public Information in publicizing the efforts of the Secretary-General to close the digital divide as a means of spurring economic growth and as a response to the continuing gulf between developed and developing countries, and, in this context, requests the Department to further enhance its role;

III. New programmatic priorities for the Department of Public Information

33. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on programmatic aspects of the proposed programme budget for 2004-2005 for the Department of Public Information,[11] and welcomes the new subprogramme structure that includes: strategic communications services, news services, library services and outreach services;

34. *Acknowledges* that the Department of Public Information, with the assistance of the Office of Internal Oversight Services of the Secretariat, is currently in the process of formulating methodologies and conducting a systematic evaluation of the impact, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the activities of the Department over a three-year period, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 57/300, and requests the Secretary-General to report on the progress made to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session;

35. *Reaffirms* that the Department of Public Information must prioritize its work programme while respecting existing mandates and in line with rule 5.6 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, to focus its message and concentrate its efforts better and, as a function of performance management, to match its programmes with the needs of its target audiences, on the basis of improved feedback and evaluation mechanisms;

36. *Underlines* the need for the proposed indicators of achievement and expected accomplishments, which for the first time form part of the programme budget, to be clearly defined, measurable and able to contribute to a meaningful evaluation of activities;

United Nations information centres

37. *Stresses* that the United Nations information centres and information components or regional hubs, as applicable, should play a significant role in disseminating information about the work of the Organization to the peoples of the world, including in the areas outlined in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, and emphasizes that the information centres, or regional hubs, as applicable, as the "field voice" of the Department of Public Information, should promote public awareness of and mobilize support for the work of the United Nations at the local level, bearing in mind that information in the local languages has the strongest impact on the local populations;

38. *Takes note* of the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the review of the structure and operations of United Nations information centres,[12] and requests the Secretary-

[11] A/AC.198/2003/3.
[12] A/57/747.

General to submit further detailed information to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session;

39. *Welcomes* the ongoing efforts of the Department of Public Information to review the allocation of both staff and financial resources to United Nations information centres with a view to possibly transferring resources from information centres in developed countries to United Nations information activities in developing countries, emphasizing the needs of the least developed countries, and to any other activities of high priority, such as multilingualism on the United Nations web site and evaluation of services, in consultation with concerned Member States;

40. *Reaffirms* paragraph 15 of its resolution 57/300, in which it took note of the proposal of the Secretary-General contained in action 8 of his report,[5] to rationalize the network of United Nations information centres around regional hubs, where appropriate, in consultation with concerned Member States, starting with the creation of a Western European hub, followed by a similar approach in other high-cost developed countries, and requests the Secretary-General to submit a progress report on the implementation of the proposal with the objective of applying this initiative in other regions, in consultation with Member States, where this initiative will strengthen the flow and exchange of information in developing countries;

41. *Encourages* the efforts by some United Nations information centres to develop their own web pages in local languages, also encourages the Department of Public Information to provide resources and technical facilities, in particular to those information centres whose web pages are not yet operational and to develop web pages in the respective local languages of their host countries, and further encourages host countries to respond to the needs of the information centres;

42. *Recalls* the appeal made by the Secretary-General to the host countries of United Nations information centres to facilitate the work of the centres in their countries by providing rent-free or rent-subsidized premises, while taking into account the economic condition of the host countries and bearing in mind that such support should not be a substitute for the full allocation of financial resources for the information centres in the context of the programme budget of the United Nations;

43. *Notes* the continuing support of the Department of Public Information in the consolidation of the United Nations field presence in a single United Nations house, and requests the Secretary-General to report in detail on the progress made to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session;

IV. Strategic communications services

44. *Acknowledges* that the strategic communications services, to be implemented by the newly created Strategic Communications Division, will be responsible for devising and disseminating United Nations messages by developing communications strategies, in close collaboration with the substantive departments, United Nations funds and programmes and the specialized agencies of the United Nations, in full compliance with the legislative mandates;

Promotional campaigns

45. *Recognizes* that promotional campaigns aimed at supporting special sessions and international conferences of the United Nations are part of the core

responsibility of the Department of Public Information, and welcomes the efforts of the Department to examine creative ways in which it can organize and implement these campaigns in partnership with the substantive departments concerned, using the United Nations Millennium Declaration as its guide;

46. *Supports* the efforts of the Department of Public Information, while ensuring respect for the priorities established by the General Assembly, to also focus its promotional campaigns on the major issues identified by the Secretary-General;

47. *Appreciates* the work of the Department of Public Information in promoting, through its campaigns, issues of importance to the international community, such as sustainable development, children, HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases and decolonization, as well as the dialogue among civilizations, culture of peace and tolerance and the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, and encourages the Department, in cooperation with the countries concerned and with the relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, to continue to take appropriate measures to enhance world public awareness of these and other important global issues;

48. *Encourages* the Department of Public Information to continue to work within the United Nations Communications Group to coordinate the implementation of communication strategies with the heads of information of the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system;

49. *Stresses* the need for the renewed emphasis in support of Africa's development, in particular by the Department of Public Information, in order to promote awareness in the international community of the nature of the critical economic and social situation in Africa and of the priorities of the New Partnership for Africa's Development;

Role of the Department of Public Information in United Nations peacekeeping

50. *Commends* the efforts of the Secretary-General to strengthen the public information capacity of the Department of Public Information for the establishment and functioning of the information components of peacekeeping operations and of political and peace-building missions of the United Nations, including its promotional efforts and other information support activities, and requests the Secretariat to continue to ensure the involvement of the Department from the planning stage of future operations through interdepartmental consultations and coordination with other departments of the Secretariat, in particular with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations;

51. *Stresses* the importance of enhancing the public information capacity of the Department of Public Information in the field of peacekeeping operations and its role in the selection process of spokespersons for United Nations peacekeeping operations or missions, and, in this regard, encourages the Department to second spokespersons who have the necessary skills to fulfil the tasks of the operations or missions, taking into account the equitable geographical distribution in accordance with Chapter XV, Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations, and to consider views expressed, especially by host countries, when appropriate, in this regard;

52. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to report to the Committee on Information on the role of the Department of Public Information in United Nations peacekeeping at its successive sessions;

53. *Welcomes* the transfer of the functions of the Cartographic Section from the Department of Public Information to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, since the outputs of the Section are more closely aligned to the needs and activities of that Department;

V. News services

54. *Stresses* that the central objective of the news services, implemented by the News and Media Division, is the timely delivery of accurate, objective and balanced news and information emanating from the United Nations system in all four mass media — print, radio, television and Internet — to the media and other audiences worldwide with the overall emphasis on multilingualism;

Traditional means of communication

55. *Also stresses* that radio remains one of the most cost-effective and far-reaching traditional media available to the Department of Public Information and an important instrument in United Nations activities, including development and peacekeeping, with a view to achieving a broad client base around the world;

56. *Notes with satisfaction* the success of the pilot project on the development of an international radio broadcasting capacity for the United Nations, and endorses the proposal of the Secretary-General that the pilot project be made an integral part of the activities of the Department;

57. *Requests* the Secretary-General to pay full attention to the parity of the six official languages in expanding the international radio broadcasting capacity;

58. *Notes* the efforts being made by the Department of Public Information to disseminate programmes directly to broadcasting stations all over the world in the six official languages, with the addition of Portuguese, as well as in other languages, where possible, and, in this regard, stresses the need for impartiality and objectivity concerning information activities of the United Nations;

59. *Encourages* the Department of Public Information to continue building partnerships with local, national and regional broadcasters to extend the United Nations message to all the corners of the world;

60. *Emphasizes* that United Nations Radio and Television should take full advantage of the technological infrastructure made available in recent years, including satellite platforms, information and communication technologies and the Internet, and requests the Secretary-General, as a part of the reorientation of the Department of Public Information, to consider a global strategy for broadcasting, taking into account existing technologies;

United Nations web site

61. *Reiterates its appreciation* for the efforts of the Department of Public Information in creating a high-quality, user-friendly and cost-effective web site, noting that this is especially noteworthy considering the scope of the undertaking, the budget constraints within the United Nations and the remarkably rapid expansion of the World Wide Web, reaffirms that the web site remains a very useful tool for media, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, Member States and the general public, and welcomes the creation of the United Nations web site on terrorism;

62. *Encourages* the Department of Public Information to continue to take the necessary measures in order to ensure accessibility to the United Nations web site by persons with disabilities, including visual and hearing disabilities, and asks the Department to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session on its efforts in this regard;

63. *Notes with concern* that the multilingual development and enrichment of the United Nations web site has been slower than expected, because of a lack of resources, among other factors, and that content-providing offices have not, in general, been making their materials available on the United Nations web site in all six official languages;

64. *Stresses* the need to adopt a decision on the multilingual development, maintenance and enrichment of the United Nations web site, considering, inter alia, the possibility of organizational restructuring towards separate language units for each of the six official languages within the Department of Public Information, in order to achieve full parity among the official languages of the United Nations;

65. *Reaffirms* its request to the Secretary-General to ensure, until such a decision has been taken and implemented, to the extent possible and while maintaining an up-to-date and accurate web site, the equitable distribution of financial and human resources within the Department of Public Information allocated to the United Nations web site among all official languages on a continuous basis, and to make every possible effort to ensure also that all materials contained on the web site that do not change and do not need regular maintenance are made available in all six official languages;

66. *Also reaffirms* the need to achieve full parity among the six official languages on the United Nations web site, and, in this regard, takes note of the proposal of the Secretary-General, as contained in paragraph 33 of his report on the continued development, maintenance and enrichment of the United Nations web site in the six official languages,[13] to translate all English materials and databases posted on the United Nations web site by the respective content-providing offices of the Secretariat into all official languages, and requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session on the most practical, efficient and cost-effective means of implementing this proposal;

67. *Requests* the Secretary-General to include in his report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session proposals relating to the designation of a date by which all supporting arrangements would be in place for the implementation

[13] A/AC.198/2002/6.

of this concept, after which date parity would continue, as well as proposals relating to the exemption from translation of specific items on the United Nations web site;

68. *Stresses* the importance of access for the public to the United Nations Treaty Collection and United Nations parliamentary documentation;

69. *Encourages* the Secretary-General, through the Department of Public Information, to continue to take full advantage of recent developments in information technology, including the Internet, in order to improve, in a cost-effective manner, the expeditious dissemination of information on the United Nations, in accordance with the priorities established by the General Assembly and taking into account the linguistic diversity of the Organization;

70. *Welcomes* the establishment of the United Nations News Centre in Arabic, and looks forward to the implementation of the United Nations News Centre in the remaining official languages by the end of 2003, with a view to achieving language parity on the United Nations web site;

71. *Also welcomes* the proposal of the Secretary-General to provide free, public access to the Official Document System of the United Nations through a linkage with the Organization's web site[14] for consideration in the context of the proposed programme budget for 2004-2005, and requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session in this regard;

72. *Commends* the Information Technology Services Division of the Office of Central Support Services of the Secretariat on its efforts to ensure that the required technological infrastructure is in place to accommodate the imminent linkage of the Official Document System to the United Nations web site, and also commends the Department of Public Information for addressing issues of content management relating to that System;

73. *Notes* that the integration of the Official Document System with the United Nations web site will significantly enhance the multilingual nature of the site and will lead to efficiencies throughout all Secretariat departments through the elimination of duplicate formatting and duplicate posting of documents on the site;

74. *Welcomes* the electronic mail-based United Nations News Service, distributed worldwide through e-mail by the Department of Public Information, and requests the Department to provide this service in all official languages, ensuring that news-breaking stories and news alerts are accurate, impartial and free of bias;

75. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the efforts of the High-Level Committee on Management to establish a United Nations portal, an inter-agency search facility encompassing the public web sites of all United Nations system organizations, a description of which is contained in annex II to the report of the Secretary-General;[8]

76. *Calls upon* the Department of Public Information to encourage all United Nations system entities to participate in the United Nations system search pilot project, and requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session on the activities of the High-Level Committee on Management in this regard;

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[14] See A/AC.198/2003/2, para. 4 and annex II.

VI. Library services

77. *Notes* that the Dag Hammarskjöld Library is part of the Outreach Division of the Department of Public Information, also notes the continuing efforts of the Secretary-General to make the Library a virtual library with world outreach, reiterates the need to maintain the provision of hard copies to Member States, subject to the relevant provisions of its resolution 57/283 B of 15 April 2003, and further notes the efforts of the Secretary-General to enrich, on a multilingual basis, the stock of books and journals in the Library, including publications on peace and security and development-related issues, in order to ensure that the Library continues to be a broadly accessible resource for information about the United Nations and its activities;

78. *Welcomes* the creation of the Steering Committee on the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries, which is to develop and implement a strategy to achieve a more modern, efficient and accessible system within the United Nations, requests the Secretary-General, in guiding the work of the Steering Committee, to take into account the specificity and comparative advantage of each member library while ensuring an integrated, coherent and coordinated approach on United Nations libraries management and policy, and also requests the Secretary-General to report on the work of the Steering Committee to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session;

79. *Recognizes* the importance of the depository libraries in disseminating information and knowledge about United Nations activities, and, in this connection, urges the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, in its capacity as the focal point, to take the initiatives necessary to strengthen such libraries by providing regional training and other assistance;

80. *Notes* the holding of training courses, conducted by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library for the representatives of Member States and Secretariat staff on the use of Cyberseek, web search, the Intranet, United Nations documentation, United Nations Info Quest and the Official Document System of the United Nations;

81. *Recalls* paragraph 44 of its resolution 56/64 B of 24 December 2001, in which it welcomed the role of the Department of Public Information in fostering increased collaboration among libraries of the United Nations system, particularly in establishing one central system-wide online catalogue that would allow for the searching of the bibliographic records of all print holdings of all United Nations system libraries; commends the International Computing Centre for developing the United Nations System Shared Cataloguing and Public Access System, which provides a single point of access to library catalogues, indexes and abstract databases, library holdings, links to full-text resources, and archives; also commends the Department for its role in the development of the United Nations Shared Cataloguing and Public Access System; requests the Department to encourage all United Nations system organizations to participate in the System; and requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session in this regard;

82. *Looks forward* to the in-depth review of the library activities requested in paragraph 34 of its resolution 56/253, and requests that such a review be presented as soon as possible, and no later than at the main part of its fifty-eighth session;

83. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on modernization and integrated management of United Nations libraries,[15] and looks forward to further information and proposals as requested in paragraph 14 of its resolution 57/300, to be submitted to the relevant United Nations bodies, including the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session;

VII. Outreach services

84. *Acknowledges* that the outreach services, which are to be implemented by the Outreach Division of the Department of Public Information, will work towards promoting awareness of the role and work of the United Nations on priority issues;

85. *Notes* the importance of the continued implementation by the Department of Public Information of the ongoing programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries and countries in transition, as mandated by the General Assembly, and encourages the Department to consider how best to maximize the benefits derived from the programme by reviewing, inter alia, its duration and the number of its participants;

86. *Recognizes* the need for the Department of Public Information to increase its outreach services in all regions, and reiterates the need to include, in the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications, an analysis of the present reach and scope of the activities of the Department, identifying the widest possible spectrum of audiences and geographical areas that are not covered adequately and that may require special attention, including the appropriate means of communication and bearing in mind local language requirements;

87. *Congratulates* the United Nations Correspondents Association for its Dag Hammarskjöld Memorial Scholarship Fund, which sponsors journalists from developing countries to come to the United Nations Headquarters and report on the activities during the General Assembly, and urges donors to extend financial support to the Fund so that it may increase the number of such scholarships to journalists in this context;

VIII. Final remarks

88. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session and to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session on the activities of the Department of Public Information and on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present resolution;

89. *Requests* the Committee on Information to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session;

90. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-ninth session the item entitled "Questions relating to information".

[15] A/AC.198/2003/5.

11. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) also recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft decision:

Increase in the membership of the Committee on Information

The General Assembly decides to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from ninety-nine to one hundred and two and to appoint Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Switzerland as members of the Committee.